Harlem Children’s Zone

INSPIRING AN INTEREST IN COMPUTER PROGRAMMING

The 4th and 5th grade students from Harlem Children’s Zone participated in hands-on programming experiences with CodeFWD by Facebook, contributing over 24,000 minutes of coding for kids in less than 3 months.
Introducing computer science

Schweitzer Vital is a professional working in the computer science (CS) field who wanted to share his expertise and help young students like him find success in school, career and life. To do this, Schweitzer joined one of the local Harlem Children’s Zone’s after-school clubs to teach fundamentals of computer programming with the aim of giving kids the individualized support they need to get to and through college and become more productive, self-sustaining adults.

“I love coding. I can’t wait to come back next Friday.”

STUDENT, HARLEM CHILDREN’S ZONE

THEIR GOAL

Creating opportunities to learn

Schweitzer and the Harlem Children’s Zone goals were threefold. They wanted a way to inspire interest and agency around computer programming in young students, create opportunities for partnerships and scholarships for students in the future, and get more buy-in among teachers about the importance of their computer science education.
THEIR SOLUTION

Making programming more approachable
Harlem Children’s Zone worked with Facebook as one of the first groups to try CodeFWD with a select number of its clubs. In New York, Schweitzer was one of the facilitators who received educational resources to introduce students to the idea of programming in a simple and friendly way that inspires more interest in the field.

Teaching more than just students
Even more powerful than reaching the students, Schweitzer was able to share some of these resources with other educators, many of whom had no prior exposure to computer science, and help them understand why bringing these concepts to students was so important.

Giving students hands-on experience
After completing the first exercises, which consisted of prepackaged lessons, video resources and a quiz to do with his students, Schweitzer and his class were awarded a classroom set of programmable robots to continue their work, along with classroom guides from Facebook partners at Sphero. Giving these students hands-on experience with block coding in a way where they could see their work manifested instantly made the lessons they worked through feel more tangible. The students were even more excited about what they could do.

Adding in more challenges
Capitalizing on this excitement, Schweitzer was able to take things even further with his group by coming up with his own Sphero challenges, including lessons on metric units and comprehending angles. He combined multiple concepts in his activity, where students commanded Sphero robots to stop a bank robbery taking place on the maps he created on the classroom floor.

“Wait! Wait! Can I finish one more level before I have to go?”

STUDENT, HARLEM CHILDREN’S ZONE
THEIR SUCCESS

**Opening eyes and minds to CS**

By participating in CodeFWD by Facebook, the 4th and 5th graders from Harlem Children’s Zone had a strong introduction to the basics of programming and were exposed to computer science at a younger age.

“Can I keep this packet and do more at home?”

Student, Harlem Children’s Zone

Looking ahead

For Schweitzer and Harlem Children’s Zone, the next step is to continue bringing more students into the fold with new ways to inspire interest in computer programming. With his coding experience and knowledge of working with classroom resources like Sphero, he’s excited to share some of his activities with other educators in the broader CodeFWD and CS education community.